MICHIGAN Department of Education

**MOVING DECISIVELY TOWARD DATA**

1Mi·Map

# Whetting Your School's Appetite for Data

## Why go this route?

Because data is powerful! With data-driven decision making, you are able to…

- Make decisions surrounding curriculum, instruction, and assessment with greater precision and clarity.

- Measure program effectiveness, show trends, measure student progress.

- Communicate progress and explain strategies to others.

- Determine professional development needs that impact teaching and learning.

- Plan effective school improvement; set achievable school improvement goals.

- Identify and capitalize on strengths.

Many people have the experience of collecting data for someone else, with no benefit to them. Showing people how USEFUL data could be for THEMSELVES helps enlist them in the work of gathering the data.

## You'll know you've arrived when…

- Staff members share an experience of looking at their own data about a single question to see what it could tell them, and discussing its usefulness.

- Staff members have discussed the implications of their own data about a single question and identified a strategic plan for responding.

- Staff members agree on one kind of additional data that will be useful to them in making decisions.

- Stakeholders are willing to collect and analyze additional local school data for strategic planning.

## Construction Zone

### It's about TIME

**Data collection takes time, but it's worth it!**

**You'll need 2-3 meetings:**

- An introductory hour to start discussion and introduce the case study (within this packet).

- Possibly a week to collect your own data on the same or another compelling question.

- Another hour to review results to see if there's anything to learn or confirm.

Before the "results" meeting, collecting and displaying your OWN first piece of data may take several weeks. Data entry itself may take several hours. An experienced Excel user can make charts in 30-60 minutes. Someone learning as (s)he goes will need more time.

**Allow additional time to:**

- Celebrate the data that reflects your successes as you use data to focus improvement efforts.

- Make use of data at all grade level and committee meetings to explore implications.

### Potential COSTS

- You might decide to hire a facilitator for your exploratory meetings.

- Printing color copies of data will require a color printer and cartridges.

## The Process

*A step-by-step guide to "whetting appetites" for using data to drive school-wide decision-making.*

**NOTE: Steps marked with a ●**

**are accompanied by one or more**

**inserts, included in this packet.**

1 **At a staff meeting** or a School Improvement Team meeting, ask people for their honest first impression when they hear the word "data."

You can hope for answers like "curiosity" but also encourage responses like "rolling my eyes—here we go again," or "boring" or "it's what liars manipulate to support whatever they want." You'll not change any minds unless people trust enough to put their real doubts out on the table to work on. Level with them about your own skepticism as well as your hopes about data.

2 **Lead discussion** about how data might drive school improvement efforts (choose from research articles included in the DATA tab as a discussion starter, or tell your own story if you have one). Ask if people are willing to suspend disbelief long enough to experiment and see if some wisely-chosen data might interest them enough to be willing to collect and analyze it.

3 **Distribute a case study from INSERTS for Step 3.** Making a transparency is suggested. Focus on only one or two of the pieces included in the packet for analysis. Start discussion with focus questions like these:

   a. What does data say about sample school?

   b. Does the data dispel any assumptions?

   c. Based on the data, what decisions would you make if you were the sample school?

4 **Guide staff in making predictions** about your school's data for that question.

5 **Record predictions** on chart paper.

6 **Collect your own data** about that single question and enter it into a database.

This doesn't have to be intimidating—it could be just one piece of illustrative data, not a full-blown database. See INSERT for Step 6 for tips on how to collect this first element of data in "light-handed" ways that don't bog down in elaborate systems.

7 **Bring your school's data pictures (graphs, excel spreadsheet, charts, etc.) to the next meeting for discussion.**

Ask people if there are any surprises. If so, what ideas are generated by the new picture? If not, how could the data help tell others about what we already knew intuitively?

8 **Interpret data** into narrative statements (See INSERT A for Step 8).

9 **Use INSERT for Step 9 to see** if each statement represents a strength or a challenge.

10 **Decide** how to address and prioritize challenges. (Align with or amend your School Improvement Plan). See INSERT for Step 10.

# Getting more mileage from working with data

*Digging in with data can benefit your school*

*relative to the following initiatives:*

## No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

- "Districts or schools receiving Educational Technology State Grants must spend at least 25% on high quality professional development in the integration of technology into curriculum and instruction." *(No Child Left Behind: A Toolkit For Teachers, U.S. Dept of Ed, 2003)* Teaching staff can use Excel and other data management tools to meet this requirement. It will also facilitate teachers' use of formative data to guide and individualize instruction.

## Education YES!

- Setting up Excel data-bases will allow a school to manage the background information related to the Indicators of Engagement, Indicators of Instructional Quality and Indicators of Learning Opportunity. Education YES! requires schools to self-report their performance in these areas each year.

- Creation of school data bases will allow for local collection and management of MEAP, standardized test and district test results, so a school can track individual student and class data over time.

## MI-Plan

- Step 2, Page 4 *Collect, Sort and Select Data Readiness Tool,* is designed to be used by the SIT to assess the school's readiness to benefit from the use of data.

# Resources

## Articles

### "Data-Driven Decisions"

**Articles by Theodore B. Creighton, Raymond Yeagley, Philip A. Streifer, Francis Barnes, Marilyn Miller and George A. Goens.** *The School Administrator*, **April 2001.**

This issue of *The School Administrator* includes a number of articles on data-driven decision-making. *The School Administrator* is available online at http://www.aasa.org

### "No Excuses for Low Learning – School Proves Poverty, Diversity Aren't Barriers to Achievement"

**Joan Richardson.** *Results*, **National Staff Development Council, February 2002.**

This article describes how the use of data in decision-making helped a school move to the top tier of California's Academic Performance Index surpassing well-known affluent suburbs.

## Books

### The School Portfolio Toolkit

**Victoria Bernhardt, Eye on Education, 2002.**

Bernhardt's workbook leads the reader through an eight-step process to build a school's own data portfolio.

### At Your Fingertips – Using Everyday Data to Improve Schools

**Karen Levesque, Denise Bradby, Kristi Rossi and Peter Teitelbaum. MPR Associates Inc. and American Association of School Administrators and National Center for Research in Vocational Education, 1998.**

This handbook teaches educators new and productive ways of using data. Through step-by-step instruction, this book focuses on using available data to improve teaching and learning. Further information is available at http://www.mprinc.com

### Getting Excited About Data: How to Combine People, Passion and Proof

**Edie L. Holcomb. Corwin Press, Thousand Oaks, CA, 1999.**

This book outlines a process for showing how well a school or district meets its primary goal: sustained student learning.

### Using Data To Improve Student Achievement

**Deb Wahlstrom. Successline Publications. Chesapeake, VA 1999.**

Michigan's Partner Educators found Wahlstrom's thinking invaluable in explaining how to collect, organize, analyse and use data for practical decision-making.

## People

### Specialists

Most Intermediate School Districts have a specialist working with schools on data collection and analysis in their service areas.

### Coaches

The *Alliance for Building Capacity in Schools* website lists coaches whose training has been provided by Michigan State University and supported by the Michigan Department of Education. Some are active in data analysis in Michigan schools. Please visit:

**www.abcscoaches.org**

### Primary Author for this MI-Map Packet

Pat Meaux
Partner Educator
Office of School Improvement

### MI-Map Coordinator/Editor

Joann Neuroth
Changing Horses
neurothj@aol.com

### For more information, contact

Office of School Improvement
Michigan Department of Education
517/241-4285

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